

How a Woman Saves a City's Babies?



Dr. Josephine Baker, Director of the Division of Child Hygiene, New York Department of Health.

The Hygienic Campaign Conducted in New York by Dr. S. Josephine Baker, Who Has Reduced the Mortality Rolls by 1200 a Year

BROADLY speaking, a baby must be saved before it is born if infant mortality is to be reduced to a minimum. Upon this principle a woman has been working in New York for several years, with the result that, from January 1 to November 1, 1911, there were 1324 fewer deaths of babies under one year than there had been for the same period of 1910.

This year, by the way, the record is 300 under the mortality of 1911, for the first six months.

Preventive measures will, therefore, have saved somewhere around 3000 little lives in two years if the present ratio is maintained.

All this has been accomplished through the organization of a division of child hygiene of the department of health, at the head of which is Dr. S. Josephine Baker, who has engaged in a campaign of life saving with as much precision, as great a regard for thoroughness and efficiency of organization, as would be exhibited by a general in the field.

The bureau of which she is at the head is the first "established under municipal control to deal with the supervision of the health of children from birth to the legal working age," and the system she has developed is entirely her own. It begins with the education of the mother, and, once a child is born, it aims to avert disease, rather than to cure it.

It is, perhaps, in accordance with the trend of the times that, as men heretofore have taken the lead in destroying life, a woman should now take the lead in saving it.

By virtue of her position, which makes her the guardian of the health of all the children of the greatest city of the country, and involves the responsibility for the expenditure of more than half a million dollars yearly, Doctor Baker easily takes first place in the work of human reclamation. The first of her sex to be trusted with a position of such importance, she has done much to prove that the feminine hand has long been needed in this branch of civic work. And it is notable that her success in New York has been followed by the organization of a similar department by the national government, with Miss Julia C. Lathrop as the head.

In Doctor Baker's case, promotion came as the reward of efficiency, demonstrated while a medical inspector in the department of health. Still quite a young woman, she is thoroughly feminine, high of hair and eye and soft of voice. Judging from her personality, one might say that much of her success has come from a broad and deep sympathy with those she has aided.

Perhaps the most striking measure Doctor Baker adopted was the supervision of competent nurses and physicians of babies born in districts where they were not likely to receive efficient care.

"We cannot hope to cover the entire city," said Doctor Baker, recently, "but we naturally concentrate our efforts in those sections where the danger is greatest, in the congested districts of the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn, and in some sections of Long Island, principally."

WORKS FROM BIRTH REPORTS

"The birth reports are consulted every day, and a nurse is sent to any home in which there is a possibility that assistance may be needed. Last year under the supervision of these district nurses, with the result that there were only 237 deaths, of a mortality of 1.4 per cent."

Naturally, as this system has proved so eminently satisfactory, it is being continued this year, with an increase from 187 to 183 in the nursing staff, in order that a greater amount of work may be done.

Even this, however, is scarcely more than a temporary measure in a general plan of campaign which Doctor Baker is perfecting. "In order to attain the best results," she says, "it is necessary to go still further back. We must prepare women for motherhood. We must educate them to the observance of hygienic laws."

"If we could secure cleanliness and ventilation in all homes, the necessity for the greater part of our work would be obviated. Contagious diseases, for instance, start to increase in the fall when people begin to close their windows, and reach their maximum during the coldest months, when fresh air is almost entirely excluded from many dwellings. In the spring when the windows begin to open, there is a corresponding decrease and during the summer

months, when windows, almost universally, are open, the number of contagious diseases is extremely small.

"In order that women generally shall be brought to appreciate how necessary it is to nurse their children themselves, and to obey simple hygienic laws, we greatly elaborated our educational work last year by holding conferences with mothers on recreation places, in playgrounds, vacation centers and at the offices of charity organization societies. A physician and a trained nurse gave lectures and demonstrations, and this work has been continued, also, during the winter, with gratifying success."

"Along the same lines, but going still further back in preparation of women for motherhood, we have begun to form 'Little Mothers' Leagues' with 233 organizations and an enrollment of 17,950. Lectures on the care of babies have been given in the public schools to girls over 12, and they have served to stimulate interest in the language."

"I have great faith in what may be accomplished through these leagues, because we can never reduce infant mortality to a minimum until all mothers are thoroughly educated and prepared for their duties."

So far there have been given just a few of the distinctive lines upon which Doctor Baker and her several hundreds of doctors, nurses and other assistants have been working. But, as she herself has pointed out in a recent paper, no one line of endeavor will obviate the evils of a complex situation. "In stating what I believe to be the principles involved in the reduction of infant mortality," she writes, "I shall go back of the more concrete forms and mention rather those broad forces which must be studied and applied to the fullest extent before we can definitely and permanently lower the death rate."

"First and foremost, we need public opinion, the awakening of civic consciousness, to view clearly the paradoxical situation of increasing our population by immigration, while allowing our native born to die; stimulation of the people to demand that all civic forces shall be so adjusted and co-ordinated that the babies may be allowed to live, instead of forced into illness and doomed to death."

The specific principles upon which Doctor Baker has been working, as given in the same article, are as follows:

1. The study of the problem of the institution baby. During the year 1911, up to October 1, there were 14,000 deaths of babies under 1 year in the borough of Manhattan. The study of this problem is the foundation for the work of the division of child hygiene.

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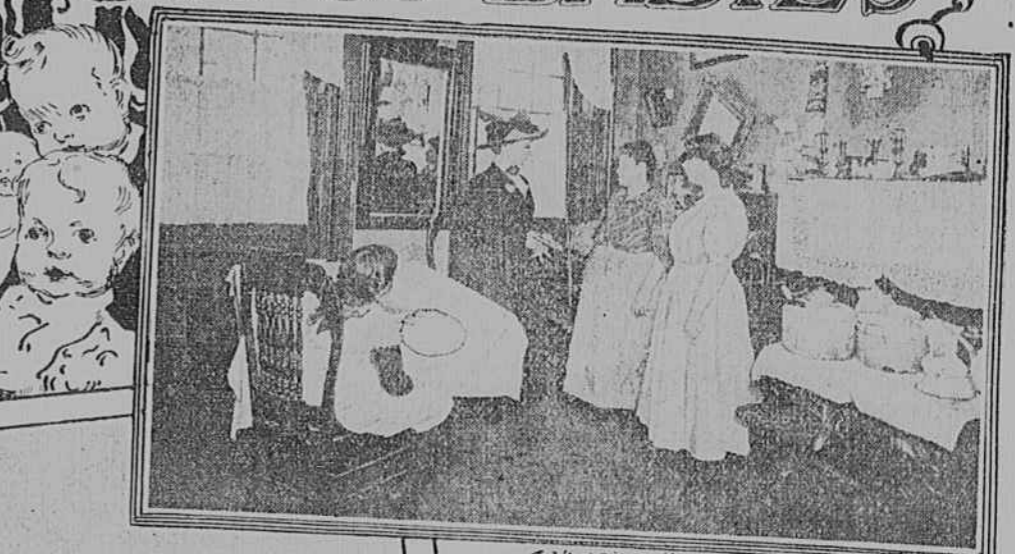
"The Milk Line"



Free Clinic for Babies.



In the Shade of a City Roof.



A Visiting Nurse at Work.



A Day Nursery in a Tenement District.

cate children were under the direct supervision of the physician, and a case record of each was kept at the headquarters of the division.

For the extension of the work, Doctor Baker has planned a campaign of educational publicity, for the general public as well as for individual mothers.

Next she aims, more completely, to eliminate the deaths from congenital causes. A third of the mortality, the above table shows, is due almost entirely to prenatal influences, which have been little affected by the preventive measures already taken. Women who thus need special care she would have placed themselves under the supervision of physicians a month before and a month after the birth of their children, thus saving a considerable portion of the third of the entire deaths which now occur within the first few weeks of infant life.

In the article before quoted, Doctor Baker specifically states her plans, as follows:

(a) Proper education and control of midwives, who, in this city, care for more than 10 per cent of the births. (b) Classes for and supervision of pregnant women, using all means to provide them with essential instruction and the means of proper care. (c) A form of insurance which will provide a stated payment for the mother of at least one month before and one month after confinement, thus obviating the necessity for physical labor on her part during this time. (d) The cooperation of philanthropic forces, relief agencies and social workers to provide proper food, hygienic surroundings and freedom from anxiety for the mother during the prenatal period of the child's life.

DOLLAR DIVORCES — AND SOME CHEAPER

DOLLAR divorces! Reno papers, please copy. Cut-rate separations, marked down severances of matrimony, bargain sales of single bliss—what a wonderful lot of inducements might be offered to mistreated tourists if Nevada could appropriate some of the African statutes! For instance, the women of the Ingawla tribe who are tired of their husbands have the Reno women backed off the map. They do not have to worry for six months, a year or two years, hold in an onerous marital leash until a judge condescends to sign a decree. Instead, they simply nag and nag their husbands until they induce the irate gentlemen to give them a good beating. Once

THE Arabs and the Moors probably hold the divorce record. In Sudan there are Arab men who have been married forty or fifty times within ten years. The female of the species cannot boast of such record. The best they are usually able to do is twenty matches in a decade. This is because the customs and conventionalities decree that a divorced shall wait three whole months before becoming a blushing bride again, while her former husband can remarry the day he is freed if he so desires. It would indeed be a great scandal for his discarded wife to startle Sudanese society by being so previous. But after her period of grace widowhood has expired, she can go and do it again without fear of criticism.

In the Barbary states a wife can get a divorce if she finds that hubby had another sweetheart before he wooed her. That is her only salvation if she tires of her better half, unless she can prove that he has beaten her without sufficient provocation, or that he had not given her proper food, clothing or shelter. And this is pretty hard for her to do, for the judge might agree with the husband that she deserved the beating and that the food and clothing that he gave her were good enough for her.

On the other hand, it is the easiest thing in the world for an Arab of the same region to cast asido

The Socialist will say that the crux of this whole matter is the living wage for the wage-earner of the family. To a great extent I agree with him, and a solution would lighten our labors, but we should still have to consider the vast and vexed question of the illegitimate child.

The problem of the midwives, as indicated above, is, in Doctor Baker's opinion, one of the greatest with which she has to contend. Proper supervision, such as is now practiced, will, she believes, do much. But nothing will take the place of efficient education, such as is now insisted upon.

In August of last year, the first municipal school for midwives was established in New York by Dr. John Winters Brannan, president of Bellevue and Allied Hospitals of New York, and of this much is expected. Eight classes are receiving instruction in courses of six months, during which time all pupils live in the building which has been devoted to the work. Not only are the women taught the essentials of their calling, but are instructed in general nursing, the preparation of meals, and the like.

While the midwife is indeed a problem to be reckoned with, says Doctor Baker, she may be an agency for good, as well as for evil. In the first place, she not only does a physician's work, but often attends to the household as well. Furthermore, her advice on the observance of the rules of hygiene will often be followed when a doctor's will not. Usually she speaks the language of the women she attends. She is looked

erally in favor of the husband, and one or the other is discontented, all he or she does is to walk across the hall and lay the matter before another judge. His decision is final. Even then it does not take more than an hour for the case to be settled, and the cost is never more than \$1.20, often \$1 or less.

In Morocco, marriages are lightly made and lightly broken. It is not unusual for the people to talk of all the husbands and wives that they had before they were 20 years old. But then the young folks have no opportunity to get acquainted before their marriage. It is more or less natural that, after the novelty of the first few months has passed, many marital storms result. Besides, the Moroccan take great delight in marriage festivities and are never disposed to discourage matrimony. However, the man who marries a divorcee must curtail these ceremonies, which is a hard blow.

"TWO TWO CEREMONIES

Trials marriages are often the thing in Abyssinia, for there a bad distinction is placed between the religious and the civil ceremony. The latter is a solemn tie and cannot be broken. If a man is doubtful, he selects the civil ceremony, which is hardly considered binding. Very few venture to undergo the religious ceremony first.

Getting a divorce from a flowered husband might sound like a riddle, but this is done among the Kadya Kumbis tribeswomen. For a girl to marry in India for the first time a man who has not great wealth, in she belongs to a high caste or class, is considered a crime, but, as in many other places, wealthy men cannot be found every day, so to settle the matter the girl is married to a husband of low caste, and divorces herself by throwing her beautiful bouquet in a well or hiding it somewhere, that it won't be easily found. Then it is easier for her to contract a marriage, and she will not have to remain an old maid the rest of her days. Other girls of this same tribe marry men who already have helpmates, with the understanding that they will divorce them. Then cheaper ceremonies are performed without the expense and fuss that must accompany first marriages.

In South Africa the men also have the advantage over the wives, that they have in many cases bought for pigs and goats. The Bushmen, for instance, can divorce their wives at their pleasure, but the dia-cashed one cannot marry, if she should take a fancy to another, her former lord and master can challenge him to a duel, and she humbly follows the conqueror. The Bushmen still observe an ancient custom that a man must not look his bride in the face, but must among the Hottentots, the Fijians and the Circassians, it is almost considered a crime for a man to be seen with his wife.

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erally in favor of the husband, and one or the other is discontented, all he or she does is to walk across the hall and lay the matter before another judge. His decision is final. Even then it does not take more than an hour for the case to be settled, and the cost is never more than \$1.20, often \$1 or less.

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